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Commission on the Status of Women

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2-13 March 1998

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference
on Women: review of mainstreaming in
organizations of the United Nations system**

Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat**Report of the Secretary-General****Contents**

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Abbreviations

DD	Department for Disarmament Affairs
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DGAACS	Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services
DM	Department of Management
DM/OCSS	Office of Central Support Services
DM/OHRM	Office of Human Resources Management
DM/OPPBA	Office for Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DPKO/FALD	Missions
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
HC/CHR	United Nations High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights
INTERORG	Inter-organizations
OCHA	Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs
OCPI	Office of Communication and Public Information
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
OLA	Office of Legal Affairs
OSG	Office of the Secretary-General
UNCC	United Nations Compensation Commission
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDCP	United Nations International Drug Control Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNJSPF	United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund
UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
UNON	United Nations Office at Nairobi
UNOV	United Nations Office at Vienna
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 52/96 of 12 December 1997 on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, the General Assembly requested that an update on the status of women in the Secretariat be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at the forty-second session. In the same resolution, the General Assembly reaffirmed the goal contained in the Platform for Action¹ adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women for the achievement of overall gender equality, particularly at the Professional level and above, by the year 2000, with full respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution. This initiative is in conformity with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, and also takes into account the lack of representation or underrepresentation of women from certain countries, in particular from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly welcomed the personal commitment of the Secretary-General to meeting that goal and his assurance that gender balance will be given highest priority in his continuing effort to bring about a new management culture in the Organization.

3. Due to the short time period between the fifty-second session of the General Assembly and the opening of the forty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the present report updates information contained in the reports of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/52/408) and the composition of the Secretariat (A/52/580); the report includes statistical data and follow-up on measures taken for the achievement of gender balance, and sets forth forecast and alternative actions.

II. Statistical update

4. The statistics on the status of women in the Secretariat show slow but steady improvement. It should be noted that under the reform programme, the nomenclature for departments and offices reported has been changed; therefore, the information reported below reflects the partial consolidation of departments and offices, while the statistical data has not yet been aggregated accordingly.² In the overall workforce over the last year, the percentage of women at the Professional level on posts subject to geography has increased from 35.5 per cent to 36.8 per cent, as of 1 January 1998. Although progress in achieving the 50/50 goal has been modest, gains have been made at a time

when the Organization is undergoing significant restructuring and downsizing. This is a small but positive trend towards reaching the mandated targets set by the General Assembly. Other developments also reflect women's progress towards the 50/50 goal. Over the same time period, for instance, the percentage of women staff in higher-level positions (D-1 and above), where their representation has traditionally been low, has increased from 18.5 per cent in December 1996 to 22.6 per cent as of 1 January 1998.

5. The Secretary-General's commitment to bringing gender balance to the United Nations has been unequivocal, as recently demonstrated by his appointment of a woman as the first Deputy Secretary-General of the Organization. Nevertheless, statistics projecting developments within Professional levels also reveal that a "glass ceiling" exists for women, in particular at the highest levels of the Organization. However, the Secretary-General has stated his intentions to abolish these barriers in the near future. While the median (fiftieth percentile) grade of men was that of P-4 between December 1987 and April 1997, over the same time period the median grade of women was P-3. As of 1 January 1998, there was one woman Under-Secretary-General as compared to 17 men, and three women Assistant Secretaries-General as compared to nine men.

6. The gender composition of offices and departments is also important since it reflects the extreme variation in women's status on a departmental level. By 1 January 1998, only four offices with 20 personnel or more (DM/OHRM, DM/OUSG, OCPI and DGAACS) had achieved the 50 per cent goal at the Professional level and above, while 10 such offices, in descending order (UNJSPF, UNDCP, DM/OPPBA, DESA, HC/CHR, OLA, DPKO, UNOG, DPA and OIOS) had attained and surpassed the previously set goal of 35 per cent Professional women, as mandated in General Assembly resolution 45/239 of December 1990, and 12 offices (DPKO/FALD, ESCAP, ECLAC, OCHA, UNCHS, ESCWA, OSG, UNOV, DM/OCSS, ECE, UNCTAD and ECA) had yet to attain the previously set goal of 35 per cent Professional women. The only office to reach the 50 per cent goal at the D-1 level and above was DM/OHRM, with 57.1 per cent, while in two departments (UNDCP and OCHA) women were completely absent at those levels. Such variations in the representation of women between departments and offices pose yet another challenge towards meeting the 50/50 goal.

Gender distribution of staff in the United Nations Secretariat, by department or office and by grade:
Professional and higher level staff in posts subject to geographical distribution, as of 1 January 1998

Department/ Office	USG		ASG		D-2		D-1		P-5		P-4		P-3		P-2		P-1		Total		Grand Total	% of Women	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F			
unscdm																					1	100.0 %	
dm/ohrm					1	1	2	2	1	5	10	12	10	11	10	2	6			33	40	73	54.8 %
dm	1						3	1	5	4	1	5	1	2	1	2				12	14	26	53.8 %
ocpi			1				4	2	9	5	18	15	37	33	29	37	24	34		122	126	248	50.8 %
dgaacs	1		1				2	1	6	4	8	3	6	10	4	9	1	2		29	29	58	50.0 %
unispf							2	1	4	3	6	5	5	5	5	1				17	15	32	46.9 %
undcp	1						2	3	5	2	5	8	7	7	4	5				27	22	49	44.9 %
dm/oppba			1				4	3	1	7	8	14	11	12	12	8	7			49	39	88	44.3 %
unep							1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2			8	6	14	42.9 %
desa	1				1	8	2	23	6	35	27	48	40	31	21	15	20			161	117	278	42.1 %
hc/chr							2		7	4	9	2	9	8	3	6				30	21	51	41.2 %
ola	1						3		4	2	10	7	8	4	11	6	5	9		42	28	70	40.0 %
dpko	1		2				2	8	1	3	5	12	6	10	13	6	3			44	28	72	38.9 %
unog	1						2		8	2	7	6	10	4	18	14	12	9		58	35	93	37.6 %
dpa	1		2				5	1	6	6	14	6	18	9	11	10	6	4		63	36	99	36.4 %
olios	1						2	1	6	2	12	7	8	2	3	6				32	18	50	36.0 %
dd							1		2	3	4	2		1	2					11	6	17	35.3 %
dpkofald							5	1	9	4	5	2	2	2	2	2				21	11	32	34.4 %
escap	1						8	2	16	3	29	11	21	12	11	14				86	43	129	33.3 %
unon							1		1	1	4	1	3	2	3	2				12	6	18	33.3 %
eclac	1						6	4	12	6	34	12	21	9	16	11				91	42	133	31.6 %
ocha	1						2		8	3	5	4	4	2	1	3				26	12	38	31.6 %
unchs			1				2	1	4	2	10	3	6	4	1	1				25	11	36	30.6 %
escwa	1						1	5	12	3	21	4	4	8	7	6				50	22	72	30.6 %
osg	1				1	2	1	4	2	3	3	1	4	1						16	7	23	30.4 %
unov						3	2	2	9	2	12	4	9	7	2	1				37	16	53	30.2 %
dm/ocss			1				1	7	1	12	4	23	8	20	12	10	3			74	29	103	28.2 %
ece	1						6	2	14	1	16	7	21	8	8	4				66	22	88	25.0 %
interorg							1		3	3	1	1	1	1	1					6	2	8	25.0 %
unclad	1						1	1	2	35	5	41	7	37	21	17	9			149	45	194	23.2 %
eca	1						9	4	27	4	35	8	37	12	14	8				123	36	159	22.6 %
uncc							1		1											2	0	2	0.0 %
Totals	17	1	9	3	51	14	159	51	302	147	442	229	358	259	184	181				1522	885	2407	36.8 %

III. Update on the measures taken for the achievement of gender equality

Special measures for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat

7. The special measures for the achievement of gender equality, issued in January 1996 in an administrative instruction (ST/AI/412), have been instrumental in guiding the Organization towards reaching its numerical and qualitative gender balance goals. To further strengthen the applicability of the measures and to clarify their practical implications, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, together with the Special Adviser for Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, co-chaired a working group consisting of representatives of the Office of Human Resources Management, the Focal Point in the Secretariat, the Staff Committee and the Group on Equal Rights for Women in the United Nations.

8. In this process, the revised special measures would include more effective measures for monitoring and evaluating departmental efforts to achieve the goal of gender balance. The revised special measures are expected to be issued in Spring 1998.

Gender training

9. Training incorporating gender mainstreaming has now been completed in the Division on the Advancement of Women, and it is forecasted to commence in the Department of Political Affairs in February 1998. It is intended that gender training be expanded in this biennium to other departments and overseas offices of the Secretariat. Each departmental training activity will be tailored to meet the unique needs of specific departments and offices. The approach adopted involves motivating gender awareness and organizational change by linking the concept of quality of work/effectiveness with that of gender equality.

Work/family

10. In order to reconcile the issues of work and family responsibilities and bring to the forefront of the human resources management agenda the quality of work/family life, the Secretary-General has endorsed a family leave programme, as approved by the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly in its resolution 52/219 of 22 December 1997, with the following provisions: sick leave to be used

to attend to family-related emergencies; partial conversion of maternity leave to paternity leave in dual-career families where both spouses are Secretariat staff members; special leave as a parental leave for up to two years; and provisions for special unpaid leave for staff members to respond to serious family matters. These provisions fall strictly within the parameters of current entitlements, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 51/226 of 3 April 1997, in which the Assembly specifies that a family leave programme for United Nations staff should be developed without creating supplementary leave entitlements. Notably, this initiative follows developments in both the public and private sectors, where employers have recognized the importance of assisting staff in meeting their personal needs in order to maintain productivity, minimize absenteeism and staff turnover, reduce conflict and stress, and improve overall performance.

Data bank

11. The Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions, together with the Information Systems Coordinating Committee of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, are in the process of developing a system for inter-agency mobility of women staff to increase their experience, as well as to provide effective means of making the résumés of spouses/significant others available to the organizations, and to further develop approaches for facilitating system-wide mobility. The pilot project will be an Internet-based databank information system. It is envisaged that the United Nations system worldwide, as well as other international organizations, will eventually join this initiative, which would result in the establishment of an international inter-agency roster of women and men candidates.

IV. Forecast and alternative actions

12. A number of initiatives, as described in paragraphs 7 to 11 above, have been taken in order to foster the achievement of the 50/50 goal, including continued efforts at the implementation of a strategic plan, and the further development of special measures. Still, the achievement of the 50 per cent overall goal for women by the year 2000 at all levels, including senior-level posts and those subject to geographical distribution, will provide a great challenge to both the Organization and Member States.

13. The composition of the Secretariat is a dynamic process whose parameters are determined by new legislative mandates, including the abolishment of outdated programmes and projects, which result in the hiring of new staff, the transfer of staff, promotions and retirements. Each of these actions has a particular type of impact on gender balance.

14. Recent projections for separations due to retirement show that this element will play a major role in determining the pace at which change can occur in the United Nations since more men than women will reach retirement in the next 10 years. The above-mentioned report on the composition of the Secretariat forecasts that between 1997-2001, an average of 13.8 per cent or 312 people will retire yearly, and between the years 2002 and 2010 that number will increase to approximately 600 annual retirements. The next decade will thus provide a window of opportunity to improve the status of women, including those from developing countries, in particular at the senior decision-making levels.

15. It is earnestly hoped that with the full cooperation of departments and offices, the revised special measures will ensure that the above-mentioned opportunities are fully utilized to achieve gender balance within the Organization. Two initiatives which, in conjunction with the special measures as well as gender training, work life and other measures, will accelerate progress towards the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, are described below.

16. It is envisaged that a proactive approach based on the need to assess the status of gender balance in each individual department or office will be taken to establish an action plan that would set specific targets for recruitment and placement, depending on their degree of compliance with mandated goals. More progressive employment equality measures should be implemented in departments that remain furthest from the 50/50 goal.

17. It is further intended that the Secretariat will develop a reference manual of proven good practices on the basis of the progress record of various national and international organizations, including United Nations departments and offices. The manual would include chapters on effective accountability mechanisms, approaches to recruitment and retention of highly qualified women staff, training of women for non-traditional occupations, approaches to enhance the quality of work environments, and mechanisms for information-gathering and information-sharing at both qualitative and quantitative levels.

Notes

¹ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publications, Sales No. 96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

² Due to the restructuring process, there may be some additional organizational changes, as well as a redistribution of posts, which will change the statistical data; updated data will be made available.



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Implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/166 on the role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in eliminating violence against women

Note by the Secretary-General

1. In its resolution 50/166 on the role of the United Nations Development for Women in eliminating violence against women, the General Assembly requested the Fund to include in its regular reports information regarding its activities to eliminate violence against women and girls and to provide such information to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights. It also requested the Fund to include in its regular reports information, *inter alia*, on the establishment of a trust fund in support of national, regional and international actions to eliminate violence against women and to provide such information to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights.

2. The report of the Fund, as transmitted by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, is annexed to the present note.

* E/CN.6/1998/1.



Annex

The role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in eliminating violence against women

Introduction

1. In its resolution 50/166 entitled "The role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in eliminating violence against women", the General Assembly requested UNIFEM to strengthen its activities towards eliminating violence against women at the community, national, regional and international levels and to provide information on the issue to the Commission on the Status of Women.

I. Role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in the elimination of violence against women

2. The role of UNIFEM in the elimination of violence against women was described in a report submitted to the Assembly at its fifty-second session (A/52/300) and to the Commission at its forty-first session (E/CN.6/1997/8).

3. In 1997, UNIFEM continued to support initiatives for strengthening the networking, capacity building, leadership enhancement, and advocacy of women at the national, regional, and global levels. These efforts remain geared towards enhancing the recognition by the international community that violence against women is a fundamental issue of human rights. In that regard, 1998 offers special opportunities for UNIFEM to focus attention on the issue of violence against women as a fundamental issue of women's human rights, particularly in the context of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the five-year review of the World Conference on Human Rights, and the review by the Commission of the Beijing Platform for Action chapters on violence, human rights, armed conflict and the girl child.

4. UNIFEM has worked to implement activities towards the elimination of violence against women through gender training for legal administration, governmental and non-governmental personnel; assistance to women organizations to analyse and change legislation; production and dissemination of information on violence against women directed at change of social and policy attitudes towards this

problem; and other innovative strategies being piloted by NGOs and governments.

5. In 1997, the Fund's agenda in the area of violence against women has for the first time been implemented to a large extent through the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, established at UNIFEM under the provisions of Assembly resolution 50/166. In addition to the activities of the Trust Fund, UNIFEM Regional Programme Advisors have worked to facilitate initiatives to eliminate violence against women in their respective regions.

6. Notable among these regional efforts are the production of a book on experiences and lessons learned from anti-violence initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean; the commissioning of a study on the pattern and incidence of violence against women in educational institutions in English-speaking West Africa; support of awareness-raising campaigns focused on female genital mutilation in francophone West Africa; and the publication of a Gender Resource Directory in South Asia for Women Victims of Domestic Violence, Desertion, and Rape. In addition, the Fund's Latin America and Caribbean regional offices, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies, have mounted a region-wide media awareness campaign aimed at raising public awareness and sensitising public and policy makers on issues of violence against women.

II. Steps taken to implement the Trust Fund

7. The previous report to the Commission on the Status of Women outlined the initial steps undertaken by UNIFEM to implement the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence. During 1997, Trust Fund activities gained momentum, reflecting the Fund's commitment towards shaping this new initiative as a mechanism that translates recommendations adopted in Beijing into concrete action.

8. During 1997, two sessions of the Project Approval Committee for the Trust Fund were held in June and November. In accordance with resolution 50/166, the Committee is chaired by UNIFEM and includes representatives of the Division for the Advancement of

Women, the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Two representatives from NGO networks who work in the area of violence against women are also invited to participate in the Project Approval Committee.

9. Projects were selected for funding approval based on their quality, the degree to which their stated objectives and proposed activities coincided with the Terms of Reference for the Trust Fund, as well as the Fund's goal to maintain a fair distribution of funding among all participating regions.

10. The Programme Approval Committee allocated all funds contributed to the Trust Fund in 1997 (a total of US\$ 1.2 million) to 36 projects selected from almost 200 proposals submitted for consideration. An additional 19 projects, also approved for funding, are awaiting additional contributions to the Trust Fund. Between January and December 1997, the number of incoming proposals increased exponentially as word of the Trust Fund spread, and UNIFEM expects the number of submissions to continue to rise in 1998.

11. Projects were funded in the following countries: Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, India, Lithuania, Mali, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Senegal, Slovenia, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine and Venezuela. Two regional projects from networks of NGOs working in the area of violence against women and women's health were funded in Latin America, in addition to a global project representing a partnership between an international NGO and the Division for the Advancement of Women. Over 20 of the approved projects have begun their implementation phase, while the rest are slated to begin by the end of January 1998.

12. The initiatives funded by the Trust Fund closely reflect the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action and represent a wide range of strategies undertaken by national and regional groups to eliminate gender-based violence: educational campaigns, capacity building of women's organizations, changing relevant laws, making women aware of their rights, public education on laws and rights of women pertaining to violence in rural and urban communities, strengthening women's advocacy skills in work on gender-

based violence, violence against women migrant workers, and various training programmes targeting police, judges, teachers, health workers, public administrators etc.

13. Grant recipients have all been informed that an impact assessment of their initiative will be required at the end of their project. This is to ensure the documentation of the projects supported by the Trust Fund and to facilitate a global impact assessment of this initiative at a later stage. A thorough impact assessment will help in shaping the focus and criteria of the Trust Fund itself and will provide critical information for the General Assembly and other bodies in the United Nations system on the best practices and lessons learned from the innovative and catalytic initiatives carried out under the auspices of the Trust Fund.

14. UNIFEM accepts project proposals for consideration throughout the year and convenes the Programme Approval Committee twice yearly in order to select projects for funding approval. Additional and ongoing advertising of the existence of the Trust Fund and its criteria is currently being pursued in order to encourage an even broader range of proposals. To that end, UNIFEM has produced a Trust Fund informational brochure that is being disseminated to a wide variety of networks and organizations and will additionally be posted on the Fund's web site.

15. The first year of operations of the Trust Fund has served to bring to light activities in various regions of the world and a growing recognition by local groups and governments of the need to intervene in order to address violence against women in all its forms. It is the hope of UNIFEM that the enthusiasm set forth by launching this action-oriented initiative will be sustained through 1998 and even further expanded in the future, through a strengthened commitment of United Nations agencies and additional contributions from member States.

16. In its short period of existence, the Trust Fund has already demonstrated its potential to contribute to the work of the United Nations in the promotion and protection of the human rights of women. To that end, UNIFEM will continue to ensure that lessons learned from its operational activities form part of the system-wide efforts of the United Nations to eliminate violence against women.

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mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system**

High-level plenary review in the year 2000**Note by the Secretariat**

In its resolution 52/100, the General Assembly decided "to convene, in the year 2000, a high-level plenary review to appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Beijing Platform for Action five years after its adoption, and to consider further actions and initiatives", and requested the Secretary-General, "with a view to ensuring participation at a high political level, to explore in a report to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly the possibility, among other options, of convening the review (a) at the start of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, (b) within the framework of the proposed millennium Assembly if agreed upon by the General Assembly, (c) following the annual session of the Commission on the Status of Women, or (d) as a special session of the General Assembly". It requested the Commission on the Status of Women to consider the report of the Secretary-General requested above at its forty-second session, thus enabling the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, to decide on this issue as soon as possible at its fifty-second session.

The attention of the Commission is drawn to the report of the Secretary-General in accordance with resolution 52/100, contained in A/52/789, which will be before the Commission.

* E/CN.6/1998/1.





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Question of the realization in all countries of the economic, social and cultural rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and study of special problems which the developing countries face in their efforts to achieve these human rights

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: review of mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system

Women's real enjoyment of their human rights, in particular those relating to the elimination of poverty, economic development and economic resources

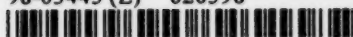
Report of the Secretary-General

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* E/CN.4/1998/1 and Add.1.

** E/CN.6/1998/1.



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I. Introduction

1. At its substantive session of 1996, the Economic and Social Council adopted agreed conclusions 1996/1 on poverty eradication.¹ In the agreed conclusions, the Council, *inter alia*, stressed the need for gender analysis and for the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in United Nations activities for poverty eradication (paras. 13 and 27-33). The Council also invited the Commission on Human Rights, in the context of its work on poverty, to focus on the relationship between all human rights, including the right to development, and poverty, notably extreme poverty. The Council suggested that the Commission on Human Rights consider providing an input to the Commission on the Status of Women on ensuring women's equal enjoyment of their human rights, in particular those related to economic resources (para. 45).

2. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-first session, in 1997, followed up the Council's agreed conclusions on poverty eradication. It noted that, in 1998, the Commission on Human Rights could consider providing, in accordance with paragraph 45 of the Council's agreed conclusions 1996/1, an input to the Commission on the Status of Women on ensuring women's real enjoyment of their human rights, in particular those relating to the alleviation of women's poverty, economic development and economic resources. With a view to facilitating interaction between the two Commissions, the Secretariat was invited to submit a report on that subject to both the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights. The report was to be prepared in cooperation with the Centre for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat.²

3. In resolution 1997/11, the Commission on Human Rights requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to submit to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fourth session, in accordance with Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1996/1, a report, to be prepared by the Centre for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women, on the obstacles encountered and progress achieved in the field of women's rights relating to economic resources, the elimination of poverty and economic development, in particular for women living in extreme poverty.³

4. Based on the mandates provided by the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights, the present report first examines the impact of women's unequal enjoyment of rights on their socio-economic status. To that end, it assesses

how the denial of rights, particularly those relating to economic development and economic resources, creates obstacles to women's equality and thus their enjoyment of human rights. Particular attention is paid to gender factors that perpetuate women's unequal access and treatment with regard to economic and social rights and opportunities. The report then assesses the progress made in intergovernmental and expert bodies in addressing women's enjoyment of their human rights, particularly those related to economic development, economic resources and the elimination of poverty.

5. As part of the preparations for the forty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat convened, jointly with the Institute for Human Rights at the Åbo Akademi University (Finland), an expert group meeting on promoting women's enjoyment of their economic and social rights (1-4 December 1997).⁴ For that meeting, a background paper was prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women, which incorporated a contribution from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The present report, submitted in accordance with the mandates provided by the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights, draws on this background paper.

II. Ensuring women's real enjoyment of their human rights

6. Over the past several years, a consensus has emerged that poverty, especially situations of extreme poverty, inhibit the full and effective enjoyment of human rights. Commitments have been made at global United Nations conferences to put in place policies, strategies and concrete action aimed at the eradication of poverty.⁵ The Fourth World Conference on Women noted that women's poverty was directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to economic resources, including credit, land ownership and inheritance, lack of access to education and support services and women's minimal participation in the decision-making process.⁶ The Platform for Action emphasized that releasing women's productive potential was pivotal to breaking the cycle of poverty so that women could share fully in the benefits of development and in the products of their own labour.⁷

7. The Special Rapporteur on human rights and extreme poverty of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, in his final report,⁸ reiterated the Platform for Action's finding that

while poverty affected households as a whole, because of the gender division of labour and responsibilities, women bore a disproportionate burden and had to manage household consumption and production under conditions of increasing scarcity. The situation was most difficult for women in rural areas.⁹

8. The Special Rapporteur elaborated criteria for a juridical definition of extreme poverty. He noted, *inter alia*, that extreme poverty involved the denial, not of a single right or a given category of rights, but of human rights as a whole. According to the Special Rapporteur, the issue at stake was not the "recognition" of human rights, but the real and effective "exercise" of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by the extremely poor. The indivisibility and interdependence of human rights showed that denial or deprivation of one right could have repercussions on the exercise of other rights. Thus, a holistic approach to the realization of human rights was necessary.¹⁰

9. In the light of women's socio-economic disadvantages reflected in many indicators (see paras. 11-18 below), the relationship between women's unequal access to economic resources and their persistent poverty is receiving growing attention.¹¹ Increasingly, the advantages of a rights-based approach to addressing such poverty are being explored. First, human rights require that States accord priority consideration to their fulfilment.¹² Rights are not simply a matter of policy choices for Governments, but impose legal obligations to respect and ensure the rights in question. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has noted that the *raison d'être* of the Covenant is to "establish clear obligations for States parties in respect of the full realization of the rights" contained in the Covenant.¹³ Moreover, the full recognition of rights requires the creation of effective channels of redress to hold the State accountable for violations of rights.¹⁴

10. Notwithstanding efforts at the non-discriminatory application of human rights to all without distinction, it has been increasingly recognized that the vision of human rights and the mechanisms that exist to concretize this vision, although supposedly available to women and men on an equal basis, have profited women less than men. As a result, significant efforts have been applied to redefine the meaning of human rights to encompass the specific experiences of women at all stages of their lives.

A. The context for women's enjoyment of rights: consequences of the denial of rights to women

11. Access to economic resources is essential for people's well-being. Denial of equal rights to women in the access to such resources is reflected in their overall unequal economic and social situation. Ensuring women's full enjoyment of their human rights is a crucial strategy for women's empowerment and for overcoming the disadvantages women continue to face in economic, political and social terms.

12. Statistical profiles provide an entry point for documenting differences and for identifying factors and aspects that cause unequal outcomes for women in the enjoyment of rights, including those relating to economic resources.¹⁵ The existence of unequal outcomes suggests that women's as well as men's experiences require explicit attention in terms of the protection and promotion of human rights. While great progress has been made in recent years in collecting data disaggregated by sex,¹⁶ such data are not yet consistently used as a basis for legal and policy measures in promoting enjoyment of rights.¹⁷

13. Countries' achievements in human development – that is, whether people lead long and healthy lives, are educated and knowledgeable and enjoy a decent standard of living – change noticeably when inequality in achievement between women and men is taken into account.¹⁸ The majority of the world's 1.3 billion people living in poverty are women, a situation that results from a number of factors. Their unequal situation in the formal and informal labour market, including access to land, property, credit and other economic resources, is one aspect. Another aspect is their treatment under social welfare systems and their status and power in the family.¹⁹ An important conclusion in the *Human Development Report, 1997* is that gender inequality is strongly associated with human poverty, but it is not always associated with income poverty.²⁰ In other words, even when a country is very poor in terms of income poverty, it can still achieve a relative level of gender equality in basic indicators for human development. Progress in gender equality can be achieved at different income levels and stages of development. And it can be found across a range of cultures and political ideologies.²¹

14. Access to, and control of, productive resources, particularly land, are key to addressing women's poverty, which in rural areas has particular consequences for women.²² Although women's right to own land is often legally established, gender asymmetry in access to and control over land is one of the main obstacles to the full participation of women in rural development.²³ Because of continuing exclusion of women from, and discrimination against women in, acquiring land, security of tenure and inheritance rights to land and property, women also face particular constraints in securing and maintaining their right to housing. In fact, the continued discrimination faced by women in all matters relating to land and property has been called the single most critical factor in the perpetuation of gender inequality and poverty.²⁴

15. Education is also a prerequisite for effective economic participation.²⁵ Education and training for women and girls yields high social and economic returns, and is a precondition for the empowerment of women.²⁶ While the enrolment ratios for boys and girls at the primary level is approaching equality everywhere, differences persist at the regional level and for different age groups and levels of schooling, especially at higher levels. Two thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women, with illiteracy highest among older women who never had the opportunity to go to school.

16. Women's participation in various aspects of economic and community life has increased, but remains lower than that of men. The female economic activity rate is now nearly 70 per cent of the male rate in developing countries, ranging from 86 per cent in East Asia to 50 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean.²⁷ A large part of women's work is in low-paid or unpaid occupations. In agriculture, family enterprises and the informal sector, women have little possibility for savings, credit or investment, and limited security. While of tremendous importance for the well-being of families, communities and countries, women's work is poorly measured in official statistics. Women work in different jobs and occupations than men, almost always with lower status and pay.²⁸ In industrial countries unemployment is higher among women than men, and women constitute three fourths of the unpaid family workers.²⁹ Poor women in many parts of the world remain unable to exercise their right to loans and credit, although this right is established under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women³⁰ and is considered to be a powerful tool in overcoming poverty and economic dependence.³¹

17. Women's participation in decision-making at all levels and in all areas – in the political, economic and social realms

– is a prerequisite for justifying claims of the legitimacy of governance. It is also a strategic need in achieving women's equality and empowerment. Yet the level of women's participation in decision-making remains well below a critical mass in many legislative and executive bodies. In fact, in 48 countries, there were no women ministers at all at the end of 1996.³²

18. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women has examined the link between denial of women's rights in the economic realm and violence against women. She noted that denying women economic power and economic independence was a major cause of violence against women because it prolonged their vulnerability and dependence. She also noted that unless economic relations in a society were more equitable towards women, the problem of violence against women would continue.³³ The consequences of such denial of women's rights in the economic realm included the fact that women were prevented from fully participating in and contributing to the development of society.³⁴

B. Factors and obstacles affecting women's real enjoyment of their human rights

19. Gender-based considerations need to inform the analysis of the content and nature of human rights, as well as of measures to ensure their enjoyment. There are many processes at the domestic and international levels through which the content of human rights is clarified and their implementation occurs. The systematic integration of gender factors into these processes, into measures for implementation and into domestic and international monitoring remains to be achieved.

20. Women are entitled to the enjoyment of all human rights, including those relating to economic development and resources, as part of their equal entitlement to all human rights. At the same time, women's gender roles have an impact on their ability to access rights, resources and opportunities, and treatment on an equal basis. Not only is equal access to these rights an end in itself, these rights are essential components of women's empowerment, of social justice and overall social and economic development. Women's equal access to resources and opportunities and equal treatment in economic and social life are cornerstones for the full realization of these rights. Lack of equal access represents a denial of rights, which results in the perpetuation of women's poverty.

21. In the enjoyment of rights, women face constraints and vulnerabilities which differ from those that affect men and

which are of significant relevance in the enjoyment of these rights. At the same time, these variables mean that women may be affected by violations of rights in ways that are different from men. Women are disproportionately affected by poverty and social marginalization. Women suffer systemic and systematic discrimination,³⁵ which results in deep patterns of inequality and disadvantage. The overall level of development and of resources available to countries, women's literacy levels and women's access to information and to legal remedies also have an impact on women's enjoyment of their rights. The gender-based division of labour, with women being primarily responsible for reproductive work and work related to the family, and men for productive work, also contributes to the perpetuation of gender-based inequalities.

22. Many women experience multiple barriers in gaining access to rights such as employment, housing, land, food and social security. These barriers include the disproportionate burden of reproductive and care-giving work performed by women; the sexual division of labour and segregated employment practices; discriminatory traditional and cultural laws and practices; unequal representation by women in political and other decision-making structures at all levels; and the widespread violence perpetrated against women. Women's social position, marital status, class, or membership in particularly vulnerable groups, such as refugee or migrant women, rural or urban poor women, are often linked to *de facto*, and sometimes also to *de jure*, discrimination.

23. When laws, customs, traditional roles, family responsibilities or attitudes and stereotypes provide people – women – with fewer opportunities or place them at a disadvantage as they seek to access opportunities, remedial measures are needed to eliminate such disadvantages, and to prevent them from recurring. When policies are designed in the context of respect for, and promotion and protection of, human rights, then unequal outcomes for women in the economic and social spheres oblige Governments to design policies and other measures in a way that reduces inequalities.

III. Progress achieved in ensuring women's real enjoyment of their human rights

24. Governments have expressed and reiterated their firm commitment to the indivisibility and interrelatedness of all human rights, including in the Vienna Declaration and

Programme of Action, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The following section focuses on women's enjoyment of economic and social rights as a strategy to ensure that women do not experience poverty disproportionately. Denial of these rights not only perpetuates women's poverty, but also constitutes a major obstacle to women's empowerment and advancement in general.

A. International human rights instruments

25. Economic and social rights are contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and have been further elaborated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,³⁶ with States parties to the Covenant undertaking to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights.³⁷

26. Standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO) define rights and obligations to improve conditions of life and work worldwide. Although most of these standards apply equally to women and men workers, specific standards for women workers have also been adopted.³⁸

27. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women elaborates the meaning of discrimination on the basis of sex and addresses women's equal rights with men in the political, economic and private spheres.³⁹ The Convention encompasses rights in the fields of education (art. 10) and employment, including social security (art. 11), and in other areas of economic and social life. It establishes women's right to equality with men before the law and provides for equal legal capacity in civil matters, including contracts and property administration (art. 15). It also establishes the same rights for spouses in respect of ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property (art. 16).

28. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has, through its monitoring of the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, contributed to the better understanding of these rights and the obligations resulting therefrom for States parties to ensure realization of rights. The Committee increasingly highlights gender issues in its general comments on specific articles of the Covenant⁴⁰ in an effort to encourage States parties to take active steps to overcome women's inequality and disadvantage in the enjoyment of rights. It also requests information about the situation of women in the consideration of States parties reports, in such areas as remuneration, women's position in the labour

market, the situation of women migrant workers and women's inheritance rights so as to highlight situations of continuous unequal enjoyment of rights by women.

29. While the Covenant represents the most comprehensive single global legal instrument on economic, social and cultural rights, such rights are contained in many other international, regional or national instruments. They can also be found in other types of instruments of a global or regional character and are reflected in consensus policy documents, in addition to legal instruments *stricto sensu*.

B. Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

30. The World Conference on Human Rights clearly acknowledged that women's rights are human rights. The Conference emphasized the need for Governments and the United Nations to make the full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex a priority of their policies. It also underlined the importance of the integration and full participation of women as both agents and beneficiaries in the development process, and reiterated the objectives established on global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development set forth in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and chapter 24 of Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.⁴¹

31. The World Conference on Human Rights reaffirmed the right to development, as established in the Declaration on the Right to Development, as a universal and inalienable right and integral part of fundamental human rights.

C. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

1. Gender equality in the Platform for Action

32. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provide a framework for translating the provisions and positive forces of human rights law into concrete actions for achieving gender equality through the real and effective exercise by women, including women living in poverty, of their human rights. In this endeavour, the significance of the general prohibition of discrimination is paramount. It has two aspects, both of which are reflected in the broad

objectives of the Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: one, to ensure that gender does not impair women's ability to exercise their human rights; and two, to undertake specific efforts to change – and transform – structures and processes that perpetuate women's inequality in all spheres of life.

33. In its diagnosis of the situation with regard to the human rights of women, the Platform for Action takes a comprehensive view of these rights, in accordance with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Discrimination against women and girls in the allocation of economic and social resources is identified as a direct violation of women's and girls' economic, social and cultural rights.⁴² The Platform for Action recognizes that gender directly creates a disadvantage for women and girls in the enjoyment of their human rights when it states: "If the goal of the full realization of human rights for all is to be achieved, international human rights instruments must be applied in such a way as to take more clearly into consideration the systematic and systemic nature of discrimination against women that gender analysis has clearly indicated".⁴³

2. The human rights of women as a critical area of concern and as an integral component of the Platform for Action as a whole

34. The human rights of women and women and poverty are identified as critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action.⁴⁴ In these, as well as in other critical areas of concern, the Platform highlights measures to promote women's enjoyment of their economic and social rights as a means of overcoming poverty and disadvantage. The human rights of women are also addressed, directly or indirectly, in several other critical areas of concern, with women's enjoyment of their economic and social rights being identified as instrumental for the achievement of the goal of gender equality in those areas. This is clearly established in such strategic objectives as "Revise laws and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources" (strategic objective A.2); "Ensure equal access to education" (strategic objective B.1); "Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources" (strategic objective F.1); "Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade" (strategic objective F.2); and "Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination" (strategic objective F.5).⁴⁴

35. Many of the actions recommended under these strategic objectives illustrate the nature and scope of economic and social rights contained in international legal instruments. Through the recommended actions, the Platform aims at the elimination of discrimination on the one hand and at ensuring the achievement of equality for women on the other. Women's full and equal enjoyment of economic and social rights as a means for reducing and eliminating poverty and for realizing sustainable development is addressed in several areas of the Platform for Action, including poverty, the economy, the environment and violence against women. The actions indicate the continuing existence of obstacles to women's de facto enjoyment of human rights in the economic and social realms. They are also indicative of the multifaceted actions necessary to eliminate discrimination in the enjoyment by women of their economic and social rights.

36. Examples of actions include the ratification of international human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and conventions of the International Labour Organization (Platform for Action, paras. 80 (j), 124 (e) and 230 (a) and (b)); the withdrawal of reservations thereto (*ibid.*, para. 230 (c)); and the revision/elimination of discriminatory laws and regulations to establish equality under the law (*ibid.*, para. 165 (b)) or the enactment of specific legislation (paras. 165 (a), 232 (b)).

37. Other actions aim at achieving women's equal access to education and training, health, and participation in decision-making, which are tools for enabling women to take advantage of economic opportunities and resources. Their aim is to provide a basis for women's enjoyment of economic and social rights through access to education and training or protection from violence. Specific economic and social rights are targeted through calls for the non-discriminatory availability of social security systems to women (Platform for Action, paras. 58 (o), 165 (f) and 175 (g)). Other actions deal with women's equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies (*ibid.*, paras. 61 (b) and 165 (e)); access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources; and equal pay for equal work or work of equal value (*ibid.*, para. 165 (a)).

38. The Platform for Action establishes gender mainstreaming as a major strategy in the pursuit of gender equality, including in the area of human rights. While

progress is being made in this regard, there remains much scope for developing practical actions to ensure that a gender perspective is applied systematically in all human rights activities.

39. The mainstreaming directive is critical to women's enjoyment of their human rights as it allows for an analysis of the gender factors that create obstacles to women's enjoyment of these rights and that need to be addressed and remedied within larger policy frameworks. Gender mainstreaming also allows for the identification of aspects of particular concern to women which are linked to these rights, and which might not have been considered part of their promotion and protection in the past. Through gender analysis and similar tools, systemic and structural obstacles which limit women's enjoyment of their human rights can be identified. Once gender-based constraints are made explicit, the responsibilities and obligations of Governments to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of women can be identified and required actions implemented.

3. Actors responsible for implementing actions in the Platform for Action concerning women's enjoyment of their economic and social rights

40. The enjoyment of human rights by women, in particular those relating to economic development and resources, is hampered by existing unequal access to resources, technology and information. Women's lack of access or reduced access must therefore be a particular concern to Governments. Safeguards in policies and programmes might be necessary to ensure to women the enjoyment of all human rights, including those in the economic realm.

41. The Platform for Action establishes that Governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the Platform,⁴⁵ but it also allocates responsibility for implementation to other actors at the national and international levels. In addition to Governments, the Platform for Action identifies non-governmental organizations, including women's groups and organizations of civil society, the United Nations, including specific bodies and entities of the United Nations system, as actors responsible for implementation.

42. In accordance with international human rights law, the State is identified as having primary responsibility for the realization of human rights. This is reflected in the Platform for Action's critical area of concern, "human rights of women", where Governments are called upon to translate into domestic law and practice the international legal framework for the protection of the human rights of women,

including through implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (paras. 230 and 232). It is also reflected in the areas of poverty and the economy which establish governmental responsibility for actions on economic and social rights of women (paras. 61, 165 and 166).

43. The obligations of Governments in the protection and promotion of human rights is supplemented by responsibilities of other actors. Given the concern about the long-standing neglect of women's human rights in mainstream human rights activities, the Platform for Action emphasizes actions aimed at better coordination and cooperation, and the incorporation of a gender perspective in all human rights activities of "mainstream" entities and organs of the United Nations system (para. 231).

44. With the roles of various players shifting and new players entering the stage, the promotion and protection of economic and social rights is becoming increasingly urgent. The Platform for Action identifies responsibilities of and opportunities for actors other than the Government to promote women's enjoyment of their economic and social rights.

45. Current trends of globalization and market liberalization are changing the role of the State and increasing the role of other actors in the international and national context. This can be seen in the increased visibility of international trade, financial and development institutions, the private sector and governmental authorities at the subnational level (local authorities). This is acknowledged in the Platform for Action, which calls on the private sector, multilateral financial institutions, bilateral donors and other actors to facilitate and support women's access to resources, to adhere to all legislation aimed at the elimination of discrimination with regard to work, social well-being and to integrate a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, including macroeconomic policies and structural adjustment programmes, from the design to the implementation and monitoring stages. The Platform for Action recognizes the work of non-governmental organizations, as advocates for the human rights of women, in the dissemination of information and in providing access to mechanisms of redress.

D. Commission on Human Rights and related bodies

46. The integration of the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system has been a focus of

the attention of the Commission on Human Rights for a number of years.⁴⁶ Recent resolutions of the Commission increasingly call for the need to apply a gender perspective in the realization of specific human rights, including in the implementation of the right to development.⁴⁷ Several thematic special rapporteurs and rapporteurs on country situations have devoted particular attention to the equal status and human rights of women in their reports. In general, they have stressed the discrimination women still face. Some of them have devoted separate sections of their reports to the situation of women.

47. In their recommendations, special rapporteurs have called for the respect of the non-discrimination principle; for national legislation to conform with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; for the abrogation of laws that discriminate against women and the elimination of discriminatory practices; and for the adoption of positive measures to improve women's effective participation in the educational, societal, economic and political fields.

48. Even though the primary purpose of the special rapporteurs has not been to consider women's enjoyment of their human rights, information submitted by non-governmental organizations and United Nations bodies has revealed that explicit attention to these rights is needed. From a human rights perspective, non-discrimination remains at the core of full and effective enjoyment of rights.

49. The Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities has appointed, among its various special rapporteurs, Special Rapporteurs on human rights and extreme poverty,⁴⁸ and on the relationship between the enjoyment of human rights, in particular economic, social and cultural rights, at both the national and international levels, and income distribution. Although they have not addressed the issue of women *per se*, they have reflected information pertaining to women in their consideration of issues affecting women.

50. The seminar on extreme poverty and the denial of human rights, organized by the Special Rapporteur (Geneva, 12-14 October 1994), noted that extreme poverty was often the result of discrimination. As the principle of non-discrimination was at the core of human rights protection, States parties were under an obligation to take positive, specific action to eliminate discrimination and to ensure that the human rights of all persons without distinction were respected.⁴⁹ It was further stated that international human rights law required States to engage in affirmative action and that this legal obligation could well be used in the struggle against extreme poverty, affecting women in particular.⁵⁰

One of the recommendations of the seminar was that, given that women are disproportionately represented among those living in extreme poverty, all possible steps should be taken to promote and protect the human rights of women, including through the introduction of a complaints procedure to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

51. In his final report, the Special Rapporteur on income distribution reviewed the question of income distribution and gender discrimination.⁵¹ He noted that income distribution was commonly measured by household and thus concealed the situation of discrimination generally encountered by women. He referred to women heads of households as being among those in situations of greatest disadvantage and poverty, and discussed the feminization of poverty. Flexible or deregulated labour markets gave rise to situations of open violation of the rights of women, the rights of workers, economic, social and cultural rights, and thus human rights.

E. Commission on the Status of Women

52. In 1996, the Commission took action to further implement the strategic objectives and action in the critical area of concern "women and poverty".⁵² The Commission emphasized both the need for mainstreaming a gender perspective and the need for mainstreaming the promotion and protection of and respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women, including the right to development, into all policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty. It reaffirmed the need to take measures to ensure that every person was entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development. The Commission recommended such measures as legislative and administrative reforms to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies. It also recommended national strategies for promoting employment and self-employment for income generation, and economic and social protection during unemployment and other situations requiring social protection.

53. At its forty-first session, in 1997, the Commission considered the critical areas of concern "women and the environment", "women and the economy" and "education and training of women".⁵³ Women's equal access to and control over land were again seen as an important component of women's role in environmental questions, including land reform programmes.

54. In its agreed conclusions on women and the economy, the Commission emphasized the role of gender analysis and the prevention of discrimination in economic policies, structural adjustment programmes, privatization, financial and trade policies, financial and public sector reforms, employment generation, structural change and economic recession. The Commission recommended the promotion of women's rights through their equal access to economic resources, through the elimination of employment discrimination and through effective legislation in enforcing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. The protection of the rights of migrant women workers was noted as an area requiring particular attention.

F. Economic and Social Council

55. In following up the World Summit for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council devoted its 1996 coordination segment to the question of poverty eradication,⁵⁴ emphasizing the need for gender analysis and for mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities for poverty eradication.

56. The Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming provide a definition, principles and a set of recommendations for action at the intergovernmental and the institutional levels to translate the mainstreaming directive into practice.⁵⁵

G. Recent global United Nations conferences

57. Attention to gender equality and the human rights of women is contained in the results of all recent United Nations conferences and summits.⁵⁶ They consider women's equality and empowerment as an essential means of achieving stated goals and objectives, but also include it as a specific objective in itself. Through these clearly established linkages, Governments have committed themselves to making gender equality an integral part of all policy-making. Furthermore, global policy instruments are couched in terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, and are directed towards the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights and the right to development, for all. These global policy instruments are therefore a further illustration of the rights contained in international human rights instruments. Women's enjoyment of their economic

and social rights is thus a firm basis from which to pursue such policy goals.

H. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

58. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights coordinates the United Nations programme of advisory services and technical cooperation in the field of human rights. In accordance with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Office of the High Commissioner has instructed those conducting assessment missions for technical assistance to take particular account of the status of women in the country concerned and to aim to improve the situation of women's rights in their recommendations. The incorporation of gender into the programme of technical assistance takes the form of advisory services of experts, human rights seminars, training courses and workshops, and fellowships and scholarships. A project on the integration of a gender perspective into technical cooperation practices and procedures, to which the Division for the Advancement of Women has contributed at its various phases, is now in the implementation phase. It is anticipated that a new project intended to incorporate economic, social and cultural rights into the various aspects of technical cooperation will also take into account women's enjoyment of these rights.⁵⁷

I. Division for the Advancement of Women

59. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women monitor and support progress in women's full enjoyment of their human rights, including those relating to economic development and resources, in the framework of the follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Activities such as the expert group meeting on promoting women's enjoyment of their economic and social rights are intended to strengthen practical action at the national and international levels for women's full enjoyment of their human rights.⁵⁷

IV. Conclusion

60. Women's full enjoyment of their human rights, including those relating to economic development and resources, is essential to any strategy aimed at poverty eradication and sustainable development. International human rights instruments, the Platform for Action and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action provide a solid basis for promoting women's enjoyment of their human rights, including those related to economic development and resources, and the alleviation of women's poverty. The Platform for Action addresses the human rights of women and women and poverty in specific critical areas of concern. Attention to both issues can be found in a number of other areas. The Platform for Action recognizes the impact of gender on the enjoyment of human rights, including access to rights, opportunities and resources, and with regard to treatment in many areas. Together with international human rights instruments, the Platform for Action emphasizes that such gender-based inequalities and disadvantage need to be addressed explicitly in all actions of Governments and of other actors entrusted with their implementation.

Notes

¹ A/51/3 (Part I), chap. III, para. 2; to be issued in *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/51/3/Rev.1).

² *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 7* (E/1997/27), chap. II, para. 178.

³ *Ibid.*, 1997, *Supplement No. 3* (E/1997/23), chap. II, sect. A.

⁴ The report of the meeting (EGM/WESR/1997/Report) is available from the Division for the Advancement of Women. It is also posted on the Division's Web site at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw>.

⁵ Such commitments were made at the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), for example.

⁶ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 51.

⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 55.

⁸ E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 36.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, paras. 176 and 178.

¹¹ The 1994 *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.IV.1) provides a detailed analysis of the causes and consequences of women's poverty and, in particular, of the gender dimensions of poverty. It also provides policy recommendations for increasing women's effective

participation in development, including through addressing the gender dimensions of poverty.

- ¹² This was stressed in the first preambular paragraph and paragraph 4 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (*Report of the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 14-25 June 1993* (A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III) and reiterated in paragraph 213 of the Platform for Action (*Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women ...* chap. I, resolution I, annex II).
- ¹³ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1991, Supplement No. 3* (E/1991/23), annex III, general comment No. 3, para. 9.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 5. See also the report of the expert group meeting on promoting women's enjoyment of their economic and social rights (EGM/WESR/1997/Report), para. 38.
- ¹⁵ The Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty, in his overview of the spread and scale of extreme poverty, noted a lack and inadequacy of data on poverty and extreme poverty. Echoing the World Summit for Social Development, he stressed the need for better quantitative and qualitative information (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/13, paras. 32-74, in particular paras. 71-74). He referred to the fact that the majority of the world's poor were women (paras. 35 and 36). The overview of the impact of extreme poverty on several fundamental human rights presented by the Special Rapporteur does not consistently disaggregate such impact by sex (paras. 122-174).
- ¹⁶ Publications such as *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics, 1970-1990* and *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publications, Sales Nos. E.90.XVII.3 and E.95.XVII.2, respectively) have greatly increased the availability, and the collection, of data and statistics on women and men.
- ¹⁷ In its agreed conclusions 1996/1 on poverty eradication, the Economic and Social Council noted that "failure to integrate a gender perspective in the design and implementation of poverty eradication programmes will prevent those programmes from achieving their goals" (A/51/3 (Part I), chap. III, para. 27).
- ¹⁸ This has been shown in the gender-related development index (GDI) and in the gender empowerment measure (GEM) of the *Human Development Report* of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). See *Human Development Report, 1997* (published for UNDP by Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1997), p. 39; and table 2.8 (Gender disparity - GDI and HDI ranks), p. 40; table 2.9 (Gender disparity - GEM, GDI and HDI ranks), p. 41; table 2 (Gender-related development index - all countries), pp. 149-151; and table 3 (Gender empowerment measure - all countries), pp. 152-154.
- ¹⁹ See *Human Development Report, 1997, ...*
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, chap. 2, annex table A2.2 (Human poverty of women and children).
- ²² *1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development ...*, p. xiii.
- ²³ On rural women's access to productive resources, see the report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/52/326).
- ²⁴ See Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities resolution 1997/19 on women and the right to adequate housing and to land and property. In paragraph 10 of the resolution, the Subcommission invited the Commission on the Status of Women to consider the right to adequate housing and to land and property in its continued research on the impact of violations of economic, social and cultural rights of women.
- ²⁵ The Special Rapporteur noted that education was undeniably one of the most effective ways of breaking the vicious circle of poverty (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/13, para. 134).
- ²⁶ See agreed conclusions 1997/4 adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women following consideration of the critical area of concern "education and training of women" (*Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 7* (E/1997/27), chap. I, sect. C).
- ²⁷ See *Human Development Report, 1997 ...*
- ²⁸ See *The World's Women 1995 ...*, chap. 5.
- ²⁹ *Human Development Report, 1997 ...*, p. 39.
- ³⁰ General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex, articles 13 (b) and 14.2 (g).
- ³¹ See Declaration and Plan of Action of the Microcredit Summit, held in Washington, D.C., from 2 to 4 February 1997 (A/52/113), annex I.
- ³² Fact Sheet on Women in Government, Division for the Advancement of Women/Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
- ³³ E/CN.4/1995/42, para. 53.
- ³⁴ E/CN.4/1995/42, para. 77.
- ³⁵ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women ...*, chap. I, resolution I, annex II, para. 222.
- ³⁶ As of 1 September 1997, there were 136 States parties to the Covenant.
- ³⁷ General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex, art. 3.
- ³⁸ For an overview of ILO standards with regard to women workers, see *Women and Work: Selected ILO Policy Documents* (Geneva, ILO 1994).
- ³⁹ As of 1 October 1997, there were 161 States parties to the Convention.
- ⁴⁰ In its general comment No. 4 on the right to adequate housing (art. 11 (1) of the Covenant), the Committee specifically pointed out that the reference in the article to "himself and his family" reflected the assumptions as to gender roles and economic activity patterns commonly accepted at the time when the Covenant was adopted. Consequently, the Committee noted that enjoyment of this right must not be subject to any form of discrimination (*Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1992, Supplement No. 3* (E/1992/23), annex III, para. 6).
- ⁴¹ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I,

Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.83 and corrigendum), resolution I, annexes I and II.

- ⁴² *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women ...*, chap. I, resolution I, annex II, para. 220.
- ⁴³ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women ...*, chap. I, resolution I, annex II, para. 222.
- ⁴⁴ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women ...*, chap. I, resolution I, annex II, chap. IV.
- ⁴⁵ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women ...*, chap. I, resolution I, annex II, para. 293.
- ⁴⁶ The most recent overview of such activities is contained in document E/CN.4/1997/40.
- ⁴⁷ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 3* (E/1997/23), chap. II, sect. A, resolution 1997/72.
- ⁴⁸ See paras. 7 and 8 above.
- ⁴⁹ Report of the seminar on extreme poverty and the denial of human rights (E/CN.4/1995/101), para. 47.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 49.
- ⁵¹ E/CN.4/Sub.2/1997/9, paras. 74 and 75.
- ⁵² *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 6* (E/1996/26), chap. I, sect. C.2, resolution 40/9.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1997, *Supplement No. 7* (E/1997/27), chap. I, sect. C.1, agreed conclusions 1997/1, 1997/3 and 1997/4, respectively.
- ⁵⁴ A/51/3 (Part I), chap. III, para. 2, agreed conclusions 1996/1.
- ⁵⁵ A/52/3, chap. IV, sect. A.
- ⁵⁶ In addition to the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (Istanbul, 1996) addressed women and gender concerns.
- ⁵⁷ See the joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (E/CN.6/1998/2/Add.1)